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QUEENSLAND.

A FEW FACTS IN CONNECTION WITH THE EMPLOYMENT OF POLYNESIAN LABOUR IN QUEENSLAND.

1894.

BY

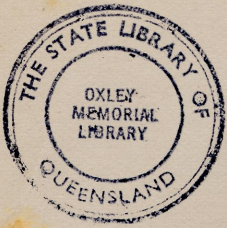
M. HUME BLACK,

Special Agent to the Queensland Government,

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THE KANAKA QUESTION IN QUEENSLAND.

THE Rev. Dr. Paton, formerly a missionary in the New Hebrides, but for many years mainly resident in Melbourne, Victoria, has lately, under date December 16th, 1893, renewed his protest to the Colonial Office against Polynesian Labour Engagements for service on Queensland plantations, and has been endeavouring to enlist the sympathies of the people of Great Britain by describing at missionary meetings which he has been holding, a state of affairs in connection with the employment of Polynesian labour in Queensland of so terrible a nature that if true would demand the intervention of the Imperial Government.

This paper is for the purpose of placing before the public the overwhelming evidence that has been tendered in contradiction of the reverend gentleman's assertions.

It is admitted that the Kanaka Labour traffic for New Caledonia (a French colony), Fiji, Sandwich Islands (an independent State), some parts of South America, and even Queensland, was ten and more years ago conducted without supervision, often with great cruelty, and sometimes accompanied by atrocities.

It is a fact, also so far as Queensland, or indeed any British Colony is concerned, all this has been put an end to years ago, and if Dr. Paton reads the press or the official reports to the Colonial Office in London, or to the Colonial Governments in Australia he cannot fail to know that his charges as applied to the facts and circumstances of the present day have no substantial evidence to back them, and have been refuted and disposed of as unreliable again and again during the past seven years.

Dr. Paton is practically unsupported in most of his allegations, and he cannot speak from recent personal observation and knowledge. For some time he has been touring for the purpose of raising funds for missionary purposes, previous to which he resided for years in Melbourne as Foreign Missionary Secretary of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria. It is many years since he visited the scene of his former—let it be acknowledged—heroic missionary labours in Melanesia, and it is believed that he has not paid even a flying trip to the sugar plantations of Queensland during the past decade.

On the other hand, the witnesses against Dr. Paton can be numbered by hundreds of all classes—Governors of Colonies, Ministers of the Crown, officers of Her Majesty's Navy, officials of every

description in responsible positions, journalists, travellers, and above all, missionaries and ministers of various religious denominations now in Queensland and on the mission field in the islands of Polynesia.

The persistence in this course of deliberate accusation of the Colonial Government, of brother ministers, of Government officers and ship-masters of high character, and of honourable business men engaged in a valuable and important industry giving employment to many thousands of European artisans and farmers, is altogether incomprehensible.

What, then, are Dr. Paton's charges? They are that the Kanaka Labour business "has been demoralising and ruinous to all connected with it"; that "the atrocious crimes and murders connected with the traffic are a disgrace to humanity and to all Queensland"; that "their long hours of labour and hard work and changed circumstances of food, clothing and houses, have caused unexampled mortality amongst the Kanakas"; that when they died they were buried like dogs"; that "dreadful immorality was encouraged amongst them"; that "the cruel oppression and bloodshed cry to Heaven for vengeance"; and that "it is the worst kind of slavery."

Notwithstanding the overwhelming evidence produced for some time past disproving his allegations the reverend gentleman in the protest before mentioned to the Colonial Office speaks of "the evils that are heaped upon the defenceless Islanders just as they are emerging from the long black midnight of heathenism and cannibalism and of a deadly system that must lead to abuse, bloodshed and God-dishonouring cruelty, little short of that accursed thing called slavery."

It would be wearisome to recount all the evidence which has been brought forward officially or spontaneously to disprove in the fullest and amplest manner these charges. It will be sufficient to quote the statement of a few officials whose *bona-fides* cannot be called in question, and whose facilities for obtaining a true knowledge of the facts of the case Dr. Paton dare not deny. Then shall be ranged the testimony of ministers of religion, whose zeal for good works and the truth it would go hard with Dr. Paton to challenge, and whose high standing in the Christian world no zealot can impugn.

Rear Admiral Lord Charles Scott, C.B., Commander-in-Chief of the Australian Squadron of the Royal Navy, was instructed by the Imperial Government to watch the recruiting of Kanakas in the Islands of the Western Pacific, and his lordship, supported by Capt. Davies, of H.M.S. "Royalist," reported "No fault was to be found with the recruiting system since 1885," and that "he cannot, after careful consideration, condemn it."

His Excellency Sir Henry Wylie Norman, Governor of Queensland and Viceroy-Designate of India, who has during the past five years repeatedly visited all the sugar districts, in an official despatch to the Colonial Office, reports that he had heard of no abuses in recruiting, and adds "I consider that large numbers of the Kanakas who have come to the colony have largely benefited by the civilizing and Christianizing influences to which they had been subjected."

Sir Samuel Griffith, Chief Justice and formerly Premier of Queensland, says:—"No serious complaints of kidnapping have been made since 1885," and "the abuses of former days have long since come to an end."

Mr. Kinnaird Rose, barrister-at-law and advocate of the Scotch bar, the legal member of the Royal Commission on the Polynesian Labour Trade, who drafted the report on which Dr. Paton founds so much, writes:—"Not a single complaint has been made since 1885 of illegal recruiting nor even of practices which by strict interpretation might be called irregular. I can remember from 1885 neither scandal nor outstanding incident connected with the traffic. The wild calumnies about slavery, cruel oppression and so on have been pretty effectually disposed of, Kanakas can now be engaged in their own island homes for a term of years' service in Queensland as much free from constraint and over-reaching as agricultural servants can be engaged at hiring fairs in Great Britain and Ireland, and separation from home ties and family associations is no more morally wrong in the one case than in the other."

Before, however, proceeding to cite the frank and truthful evidence of Dr. Paton's ministerial brethren against him, it may be well to refer generally to his first charge that the traffic had been demoralising and ruinous to all concerned.

The sugar industry, with which of course the Kanakas are alone connected, may have been ruinous to the reckless speculator. But soberly stated, aided by the moderately rewarded and reliable labour of Kanakas, the sugar industry which in Queensland invited the investment of over six millions sterling, 40 per cent of which went in high wages and profits to British (chiefly Scotch) engineers for machinery, &c., has given employment to nearly 30,000 European managers, overseers, mill hands, ploughmen, artisans, &c. It has cleared the ground of jungle and brought under cultivation 50,000 acres of the Delta and coast lands of the colony; has given an impetus to maize growing, to horse-breeding, to cattle raising on the seaside of the coast range; has started foundries and engineering establishments in all sugar centres; has built up a fleet of coastal steamers second to none in speed and accommodation. This year it has produced 80,000 tons of manufactured sugar, valued, including bi-products, at nearly a million and a quarter. As to the demoralisation of the business it may be fearlessly asserted that the proportion of sugar planters who

are zealous Churchmen, earnest religionists, generous subscribers to evangelistic effort, is probably as great as in any other business or professional class in the community. To show how the moral welfare of the islanders when in Queensland is cared for, I will cite a few of many cases pointing out the deep interest that is taken in imparting the truths of Christianity to them, and the great success attending such efforts.

Mrs. Donaldson, the wife of a planter, and her husband, at Mackay, according to the testimony of the Rev. Alex. C. Smith, convenor of the Foreign Mission Committee of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland, erected a large hall on their plantation where four nights every week they hold services and instruct 150 Kanakas with great devotedness and success. Sixty-six of these "boys" were in the course of thirteen months, after searching examination, baptised by the Presbyterian Missionary, the Rev. Mr. Mackintyre, the Kanakas subscribing on less than £20 to the mission funds. Mrs. Donaldson wrote to the *Australian Christian World*: "My labour of love has been a very encouraging and pleasant one. I believe that the 'boys' are easier to win and that mission work is consequently more successful here than in their own islands, and for this reason, that they are away from their heathenish prejudices and superstitions. I had a letter from a missionary (in the Solomon Islands) quite lately, and he spoke of the good behaviour of some boys returned from Queensland."

Mrs. Balfour, of Farleigh, Mackay, another planter's wife, gave up every Sunday to instructing the "boys" on her plantation.

Mrs. H. J. G. Robinson, of Marian Plantation, Mackay, has for the last twelve years devoted herself to missionary work among the Kanakas of that district, and hundreds of Kanakas have passed through her hands, and it is a notable fact that the majority of these are steady and reliable men and women. Her school is free to all. Large numbers have been baptised and others confirmed, their preparation for the latter ceremony being undertaken by their teacher to the entire satisfaction of Dr. Barlow, the Bishop of the Diocese, who puts the candidates through a strict examination.

On Sunday, 17th December last, thirty South Sea Islanders were confirmed by his Lordship, Bishop Barlow, at Holy Trinity Church, Mackay.

Miss Young, daughter of another of Dr. Paton's maligned planters, Mr. W. Young, of Fairymead, devoted her life to the evangelisation of the Kanakas of the Bundaberg district. When Miss Young left Australia to go as a Missionary to China, a meeting was held in the Victoria Hall, Bundaberg, to bid her farewell. At that meeting 722 islanders were present, all of whom were able to recite portions of Scripture and to chant hymns they were taught by this devoted lady. Several of these boys so influenced, when they returned to their islands; of their own accord began classes for their countrymen."—*"Speech by the late Mr. W. Adams, M.L.A., in Queensland Parliament."*

Then as to drunkenness. Of the 2,800 Kanakas in the Mackay district, 1,917 are pledged total abstainers and thoroughly sober men. (Rev. Alex. C. Smith and Rev. J. Mc L. Mackintyre.) Regarding the overwork, the same Rev. gentlemen found at Maryborough that the hours of labour were nine hours a day; at Bundaberg the same; and at Mackay ten in summer and eight in winter. As to food and clothing, all the ministerial witnesses certify that the government regulations are more than observed as follows:—Clothing per annum—one hat, four flannel or serge shirts, three pairs of trousers; one pair blankets. Rations per diem— $1\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. of bread or flour, 1 lb. beef or mutton, 5 ozs. of sugar, $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. tea, 3 lbs. potatoes or 6 ozs. rice, together with 2 ozs. salt, 4 ozs. soap, and $2\frac{1}{2}$ ozs. of tobacco per week. It is questionable whether 90 per cent. of the artisans in Great Britain are so well provided for as this.

As against the allegation that the Kanakas are “buried like dogs,” the testimony of ministers of all denominations on the spot is that on all the sugar plantations the “boys” when they die receive Christian sepulture. The Statistics of the Registrar General show that the mortality amongst the islanders is far less than that alleged by Dr. Paton.

Quoting from a speech delivered in the Queensland Legislative Assembly by D. H. Dalrymple, Esq., M.L.A., on 7th April, 1892, the following statement occurs:—

“It is ridiculous to compare the death rate of Polynesians in the Colony with the death rate among Europeans unless you can show that the death rate of Polynesians under normal conditions when they are in their own islands is the same as the death rate amongst Europeans in the Colony.

“In Tonga in 1847 there were some 40,000 people, now there are 10,000.

“In the Society Islands in Captain Cook’s time the population was put down at 68,000, now there are 9,000. There are no planters there but there are missionaries.

“In the Marquesas Islands in 1870 there were 50,000 Natives, in 1879 there were 4,000.

“At Ani-etam in the New Hebrides there were 12,000 people twenty-five years ago. There are missionaries there and the population now is 2,000.

“Take the Maoris. They are a declining race. The Tasmanian is practically extinct. The Australian Aboriginal is rapidly becoming so. In the islands where the conditions are normal and favourable where they have missionaries, where they have no violent wars and no recruiting these people are declining.”

That the Islanders are thrifty in their habits is evidenced by the fact that according to the Pacific Islanders Annual Report on January 1st, 1893, £18,641 19s. 5d. was deposited by them in the Government Savings Bank of Queensland; the number of Islanders then in the Colony being 7,979.

Now for the particular testimony of ministers of religion.

The Rev. Dr. J. R. Selwyn, late Bishop of Melanesia, says:—"I cannot help feeling that the indiscriminate condemnation of the traffic which has been expressed is likely to do more harm than good. It was true of the traffic in its beginning. It is not true of the traffic as now conducted. . . . You will readily understand that the Labour trade is not looked on with disfavour by the Islanders. . . . Of the character of the returned labourers. . . . Ministers of religion, Managers of Stations, and, above all in point of influence, ladies have worked enthusiastically with and for them. One or two of our most flourishing Stations (missionary stations on the islands of the Western Pacific) have been started by men who have been taught in Queensland. Shortly before I left I received a petition from 25 natives of Tanna who had been baptized asking me to care for them. I forwarded this letter to the Presbyterian Synod in whose sphere Tanna lies, and am glad to hear that they are being cared for. . . . Do what we will we cannot keep these islands wrapped up in cotton-wool. There is evil in the world, and in some form or another they will come in contact with it. Our duty is to try and strengthen them morally and physically, that they may be able to resist it. No one can say that, *per se*, it is a bad thing for a young fellow to leave his own narrow island home, learn to work steadily, and obtain what he wants by that work."

Dr. Saumarez Smith, Primate of Australia, visited last year the sugar districts of Northern Queensland, spoke favourably of the condition and behaviour of the Islanders on the plantations, and told a press interviewer in Brisbane "That he should not be disposed to object to Kanaka labour being utilised in the cultivation of the sugar fields provided that adequate control was exercised over the recruiting of the labourers, and that the terms upon which they were engaged were rigorously supervised." Sir Henry Wylie Norman and Lord Charles Scott certify that these conditions are amply fulfilled.

The Rev. Dr. Webber, Bishop of Brisbane, who has repeatedly visited the sugar plantations of Southern and Central Queensland, in an address to the Synod of his diocese in May, 1892, spoke of the care with which the Kanakas were treated, and having witnessed the baptism by his own chaplains of many Kanakas, expressed his conviction that the Islanders were largely benefited by the civilizing and Christianising influences to which they were subject in Queensland.

The Rev. Dr. Montgomery, Bishop of Tasmania, who lately visited all the stations in the South Seas under the control of the Melanesian Mission, said that "he has seen more good than evil in the Labour Trade as now carried on by British vessels."

The Rev. Dr. John Marden, principal of the Sydney Presbyterian Ladies' College, who was sent by the New South Wales Church to visit the New Hebrides (the scene of Dr. Paton's former missionary labours) made on his return a report in which he says, as if in direct reply to Dr. Paton, that the Labour Traffic "is very far from slavery. The missionaries of the New Hebrides are agreed that the mode of the traffic on the part of the British is fairly clean. It is idle to talk of murder, outrage, and bloodshed; such statements are untrue to fact. It is universally acknowledged on the Islands that the 'boys' recruit willingly. . . I could hear of no murders or outrages. The natives could tell of none. Instances of kidnapping I heard of, but not in connection with the Queensland traffic. We may safely conclude that the recruiting by British subjects is carried out in accordance with the Laws, and abuses of a violent nature are rare or unknown."

Professor Henry Drummond, the author of "Natural Law in the Spiritual World," "The greatest thing in the World," &c., visited the Queensland plantations three years ago and also many of the South Sea Islands. On his return to England, in May, 1892, he thus spoke to a representative of the *Pall Mall Gazette*:—"To keep these happy children to their own coral islands and cut them off from the contaminations of civilization may be a pardonable ideal to the missionary. But it is a question whether such a state of thing is possible The drafting of successive bands of natives to a civilized country for a term of years, and then shipping them back to their own islands—as the labour employer is bound to do—might become an important factor in the progress of these races. Everything would depend on the treatment they received and the moral atmosphere which surrounded them. The Queensland Government has certainly left no stone unturned to secure that, so far as legal enactments can protect an inferior race, the Kanakas are safe on Australian soil from any possible tyranny, violence, or even physical discomfort It is a simple fact that in several cases the Kanakas have been improved by their residence in Australia. When the relations between employer and employed at home are perfect, it will be time to use the moral arguments as final against the Kanaka exodus to Queensland At present the Kanakas are thoroughly well treated by their masters—on the mere ground of economy this is necessary, Kanaka labour being far too costly to be trifled with."

The Rev. Alex. C. Smith, Convenor of the Foreign Mission Committee of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland, on behalf of his Church, visited the sugar districts and made a special report which

was published afterwards in pamphlet form. From this a few sentences may be collated. He says:—"I associated chiefly with the 'boys,' saw them at their work, visited them in their houses, as well as attended their night class meetings, and I interviewed and cross-examined them as often as I could get an opportunity. Out of about 9,000 registered Polynesians in Queensland, I may say I saw the existing conditions of nearly 6,000—about two-thirds of the whole. I have the most reliable testimony that the same conditions prevail in the Maryborough district, leaving only about one-fifth of the Kanaka population scattered over Queensland which I have not personally visited. I went to the plantations having no special opinion on the matter, save a general impression that things must be very bad since so much had been written against them (by Dr. Paton *inter alia*). . . . The result of the whole was, that I was most happily undeceived. I found the islanders on the plantations everywhere treated in a most humane and Christian way. As to slavery there was not a vestige of it, rather the opposite. If the planters erred at all, they erred in making too much of their black employees. At all events I was forced by sheer conviction to the conclusion that it would be a good thing for all the white labourers in the colony if they were as well off and as well cared for as those poor blacks! . . . I found amongst them a general air of contentment, and often of placid happiness . . . The boys and 'Marys' turn out in large numbers to the Sabbath services at the head-quarters of the mission at Walkerston, some occasionally coming from a distance of fifteen miles. When they cannot, from distance or other causes attend, there is a morning service on each plantation, either conducted by a Missionary or held by the 'boys,' presided over by a native teacher, amongst themselves. There has been year by year an ever deepening seriousness amongst them. They prove themselves most susceptible to Christian influences, and are increasingly anxious to listen to the gospel. Many seem to have been savingly converted, and during the four years or so of the Mission 252 have been baptised and several more are awaiting baptism A more solemn sight I never witnessed than when I baptised nineteen catechumen in my visit in September last year (1892), while their prayers and simple addresses I heard at some of their meetings often brought tears into my eyes To speak of slavery of the worst description existing on these sugar plantations of Queensland is utterly untrue; while as to the charge of atrocious kidnapping in importing the boys, the asserters of it are beginning to keep quiet, because the charge only provokes in most minds 'inextinguishable laughter,' which Homer speaks of in old times as coming from the sight of, or hearing, something supremely ridiculous And now the result of the whole is my deep seated conviction that a very great deal of good is being done to these Polynesians by their importation into Queensland, that they are improved physically, morally, and spiritually, and that apart from the monetary benefit accruing to the colony through their employment in the sugar industry,

Sir S. W. Griffith did a wise thing (on their own account) in re-introducing them for a term of years."

The Rev. A. A. Maclaren, Church of England clergyman, at Mackay, and afterwards head of the Anglican Mission to New Guinea where he died, wrote:—"These boys are happier here (Queensland) than they would be in their own island: and they are more amenable to the influence of religious instruction on account of the civilizing process to which they have been exposed."

The Rev. J. Mc L. Mackintyre, Missionary in the Mackay district, after giving a general account of his labours, on fourteen plantations and recording 250 baptisms in four years adds "there has been a great and growing appearance for good amongst the boys morally and spiritually. They assemble of their own accord at various plantations on Sabbath mornings for prayer and to hear addresses by their own countrymen, one of whom travelled 40 miles for this purpose . . . In nearly all the plantations there are native teachers who conduct services every Sabbath . . . Many young men among them are able and willing to take part in Christian work."

The Rev. J. L. Knipe B.A., Presbyterian Church, Maryborough, writes on 7th November, 1892, as to his district "A missionary has week night classes in town and visits the plantations besides preaching on Sabbath. The Church of England also has a class for boys, and the Church of England Missionary at Bundaberg comes over to hold a service every fortnight. Almost every evening a large house that has been given to them is filled by the boys who meet for a religious service—all professedly Christian boys, and ever showing themselves most eager and attentive. Besides this on two of the largest plantations, classes are conducted by ladies resident there. All the planters speak highly of the good that is being done and say that the boys who attend the classes do not fight, as they formerly did, do not drink, do their work better and are more easily managed."

The Rev. J. E. Clayton, Church of England clergymen, at Bundaberg, writes on 5th November, 1892, "I visit regularly over ten plantations. I have taken the trouble to find out the average number of islanders who did not attend school or receive any religious instruction before they arrived in Queensland, and out of 255 whom I personally interviewed I found only 68 had been taught anything about religion, an average of 26 per cent. I have 336 Sunday attendances, and 216 week night attendances, and about 30 baptisms annually."

The Rev. C. F. Johnson, Missionary, Bundaberg, holds week night and other services, has an attendance of 900 annually. While his colleague the Rev. Mr. Eustace has 1306 annually. About 127 are baptized annually, and from 20 to 30 "boys" help them in the work as native teachers in every plantation where classes are established." Mr. Eustace speaking of Dr. Paton calls him "a sort of mad enthusiast

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with a hobby and his charges where legitimate are grossly exaggerated and are otherwise entirely unfounded and a base libel on Kanaka morality." Mr. Johnson adds to his report:—"I find the boys themselves like to come back to Queensland. I have had boys coming and going to and from the islands several times, and when I asked them why they had come back again they said they liked Queensland better."

The Rev. Mr. Brown, Wesleyan Minister at Bundaberg, writes that Dr. Paton in his recent deliverances on the Kanakas had been carried away by prejudice.

The Rev. W. Morris, Rector of the English Church, Bundaberg, writes, "I read with much amazement Dr. Paton's protest. If one tenth of the charges brought against Queensland were true to-day in respect to Kanaka recruiting and treatment here every Christian man and woman in the Colony would cry out against it. We know how guarded is the recruiting now and we know how much better fed, clothed, and housed these men are now than they would be in their own islands. Numbers of them have from £5 to £100 in the bank. There are thousands in the mother-country not half so well off as these islanders. Week day and Sunday they meet for instruction, singing, and prayer, and many return to their own islands Christian communicants, join the native churches and make themselves useful there. I have had classes of these men and women thirteen years and know the astonishing changes that have taken place in many of them. There are some 1,400 under Christian instruction in this district, and very many of them are teetotallers. Many who return to their island again come to Queensland. They would hardly do this were they treated as Dr. Paton represents."

Final brief quotations will be made from communications written by missionaries at present labouring in the South Sea Islands. The Rev. A. A. Macdonald, missionary in the New Hebrides, the scene of Dr. Paton's past labours says, "there can be no complaint on the score of the manner in which the Kanakas are recruited." Rev. Mr. Fraser, Solomon Islands writes to a correspondent in Queensland that he had engaged a returned islander, named Philip Kalu as an assistant teacher and Kalu himself wrote that "he held a very good class of his own people whom he was telling about the Saviour."

A correspondent of the *Melbourne Argus*, wrote that he had boarded a labour vessel "The Empreza," in Danae Bay, Maron Island, Solomon group. "The majority of the Solomon boys were having a sing-song on deck. The hold seemed deserted, but on descending I found in a secluded corner between 30 and 40 natives of the Hebrides and Solomons holding a religious service. Though the barbaric dance was in full swing over-head the worshippers below were very attentive and reverential at the prayers, the boys knelt with one accord and with subdued but musical voices joined in the 'Amen.' I was informed that all the Solomon boys who took part in the service had been Christianised through the agency of Mission Schools in Queensland."

The London correspondent of the *Scotsman*, writes on January 8th, 1894, "There is pleasant news from the island of Ambrim, one of the New Hebrides group in the South Pacific, which the Presbyterians of Scotland, Canada and Australia are civilizing. Little more than a year ago Dr. Lamb, a graduate of Edinburgh University was landed on the beach, not without misgivings among a crowd of naked savages. Thanks partly to the temporary efforts of two brothers named Murray, from Aberdeen, and soon to his own medical skill and Christian teaching Dr. Lamb reports the results of a year's work: four churches, five more to be built, 37 villages brought under his influence and half the island changed; Dr. Lamb's best assistants have been natives who returned from Queensland where they became Christians . . . Dr. Lamb and his assistants have never lost a pin though for a year at the mercy of the people."

Finally Miss Flora L. Shaw, the *Times* Special Correspondent, a lady well known for her exhaustive and graphic description of scenes she visits, and whose sympathies would undoubtedly be on the side of the oppressed if oppression existed, writes as follows:—To the *Times*, dated Brisbane, Nov. 10th, 1892, after a thorough enquiry made on the spot into the whole system of Polynesian Immigration into Queensland.

In connection with Miss Flora L. Shaw's visit to Australia, one of her objects when in Queensland, was by personally visiting the plantations, to ascertain the actual conditions under which the Kanakas labored, as the *Times* desired to have reliable information on the subject.

"I had read accounts of the sufferings of these unfortunate aliens, of the disregard for life which was shown by their temporary masters, of the want of food, the bad accomodation, the overwork, and the ill-treatment by overseers to which they were subjected, that I was prepared to give the most careful attention to the subject. Having now visited plantations throughout the whole length of the sugar belt; including some of the principal plantations of Bundaberg and Mackay, and, I think, almost every plantation north of Mackay, having been allowed everywhere to inspect the Kanaka quarters and rations, and to have perfectly fair talks with the Kanakas, I am in a position to say that not only are they not ill-treated, but that I have never in any country seen the lot of the average manual labourer so well cared for. The more I have seen of them the more I have been at a loss to comprehend how the absurd stories which have gained currency regarding them can have originated. One fact in itself speaks volumes. Two-thirds of the Kanakas now in Queensland are time-expired. Most of them have been home and have re-engaged for a second term of service. Some have preferred never to leave the colony.

It has been said that the system is liable to abuse, that as a matter of fact Kanakas do not know where they are coming nor what



they are coming for, and that they are not returned to their own island, but to any island which happens to be most convenient. I have inquired most carefully into each ground of complaint, talking over the subject with ships' captains, Government agents, Polynesian inspectors, and Kanakas themselves, and I think I am thoroughly justified in the conclusion that there is absolutely no foundation for such reports in the existing system. There have been grave abuses in the past. Men are, I believe, still undergoing punishment for the part they took in them ; but recruiting as it is now carried on, is above the shadow of reproach."

It is hoped that the foregoing statement will conclusively prove to all unbiased persons that the honour of Queensland with regard to the employment of Polynesian labour on the plantations of the Colony, has been clearly vindicated, and that while the Colony, by means of this labour, has been enabled to maintain an important industry, the labourers themselves have been benefited by being brought under Christianising influences, and by being inculcated with habits of thrift and industry.

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